

# Healthy Homes:



# Healthy

# CHILDREN

Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning, Asthma, and Unintentional Injuries in the Home

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City of Milwaukee Health Department

## Report Cards Show Improving Grades

On June 19th the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services - Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program sent out its latest round of Blood Lead Testing Report Cards to Medicaid providers across Wisconsin. The report cards include blood lead testing numbers and rates for individual medical providers that allow them to track changes in the status of their own testing performance as well as that of their peers.

Federal rules require that children receiving Medicaid benefits be blood lead tested at one and two years of age in accordance with their Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT), *i.e.*, Health Check visits to their pediatrician. In 2006, Wisconsin statistics showed that only 54% of one-year-olds and 41% of two-year-olds on Medicaid were lead-tested during the course of the year. Less than a third received both of the required tests.

Report card data for 2007 reflects a significant change however, with blood lead testing activity among children in Medicaid-eligible families rising by an average of 13% across the state of Wisconsin. This increase can likely be attributed to a combination of factors including increased efforts to educate families about the effects of lead, heightened national awareness stemming from lead-tainted toys, and the support of the medical community in diligently working to assure that federally mandated blood lead test-

*continued on page 3*

## Milwaukee by the Numbers... A Look Back at Lead in 2007

Recently released 2007 blood lead testing data indicates that Milwaukee continues to make steady progress in its efforts to eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning by the year 2010. Significant work remains however in achieving this 2010 goal. The City of Milwaukee Health Department Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program uses several key markers to assess the current status of the community. These indicators focus on summary data specific to the incidence, prevalence, and testing penetration for childhood lead poisoning within the city of Milwaukee.

Incidence reflects the number of Milwaukee children under age six who were newly diagnosed with lead poisoning (a blood lead level of 10µg/dL or greater) during the course of the reporting period. As shown in Fig. 1, the 2007 incidence for lead poisoning among youth less than six years of age increased slightly from 884 children in 2006 to 897 in 2007. Thirteen (13) more children tested in 2007 were found to have an elevated blood lead level as compared to 2006. This marks only the second time in 11 years that this statistic has increased from the previous year. On both occasions these statistical increases correspond to a large increase in testing from the previous year. A 10-year review over the time period from 1998 to the present shows that the incidence rate for lead poisoning among Milwaukee children less than six years of age has dropped from a level of 2,670 newly detected children in 1998 to the current 2007 level of 897. This translates into a 10-year average reduction of

177 fewer lead-poisoned Milwaukee children per year over the course of the identified time-span.

Prevalence represents the number of children with blood lead levels greater than or equal to 10µg/dL in comparison to the total number of children tested. Prevalence also reflects both new and existing cases of lead poisoning. As indicated in Fig. 2, the 2007 lead poisoning prevalence rate for city of Milwaukee children less than six years of age once again reflects a favorable drop to 5.9%. This decrease represents a 0.6% reduction from the

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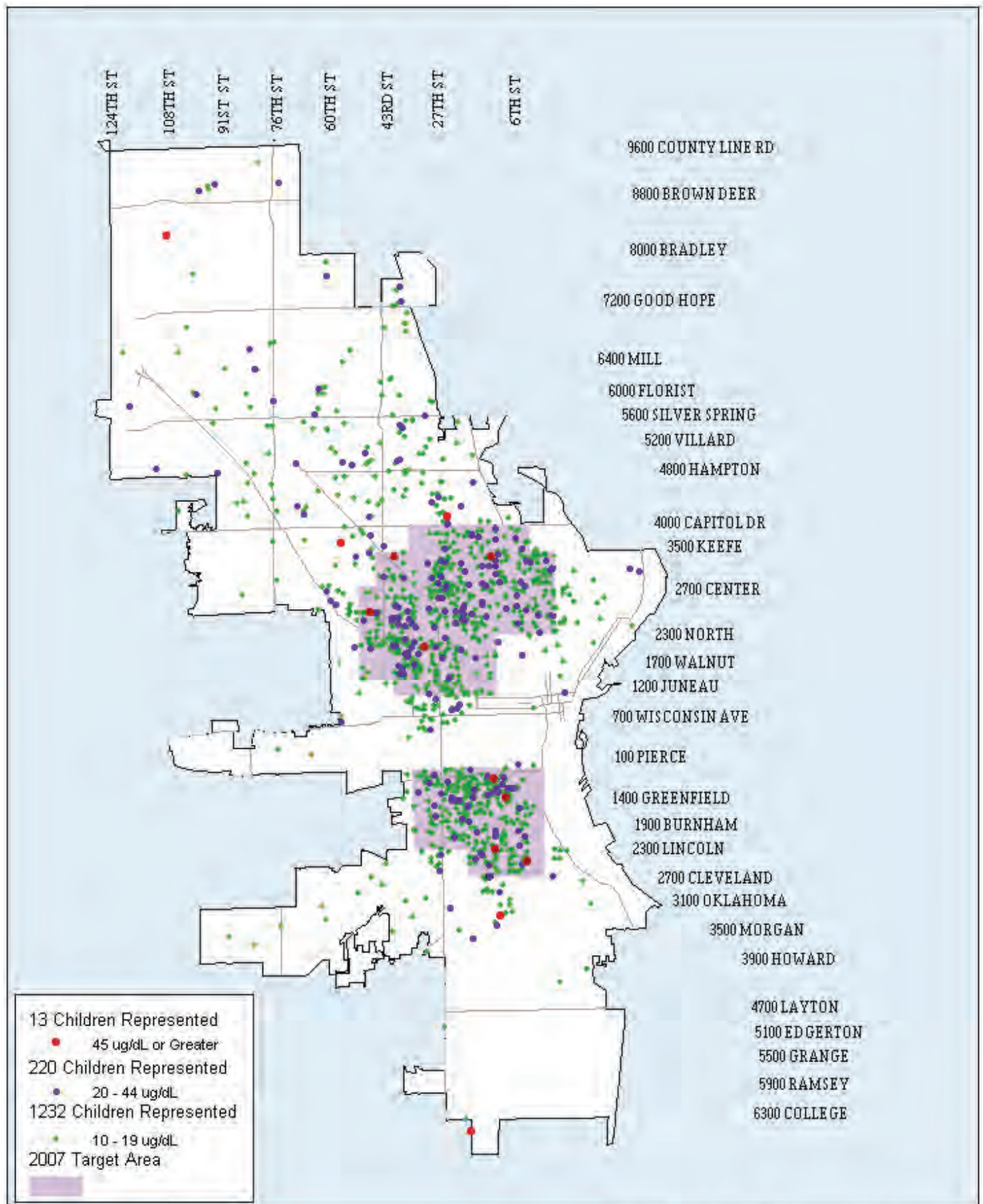
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CITY OF  
MILWAUKEE  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# 2007 Prevalence of Childhood Lead Poisoning

City of Milwaukee Health Department Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program





## Milwaukee by the Numbers *continued*

2006 rate of 6.5%. It could easily be presumed that testing 10% more children in 2007 might yield a corresponding increase in the number of children with lead levels at or above the level of 10µg/dL. However, this has not been the case. As a result, the prevalence rate has dropped accordingly. A comparison of annual prevalence rates over a 10 year span from 1998 to 2007 indicates a decrease of 20.5 percentage points in childhood lead poisoning in our city, from a level of 26.4% in 1998 to the present rate of 5.9%. This constitutes an average reduction of 2.1% per year over the past 10 years. Although Milwaukee has consistently shown a decrease in local prevalence, the current national prevalence rate for childhood lead poisoning still remains much lower at 1.6%. While pleased with its significant accomplishment, Milwaukee's progress must be tempered by the fact that our current childhood lead poisoning prevalence rate is still 3.7 times higher than the national average.

Testing penetration is a measure of the percentage of Milwaukee's eligible one and two-year-olds who received a blood-lead test over the reporting period. Fig. 3 reveals that in 2007, a total of 50.9% of the potential one and two-year-old population in the city of Milwaukee was actually tested for lead. This statistic reverses a disturbing 3.3% decline in testing penetration to a level of 46.7% in 2006, and counters it with an encouraging 3.4% increase in 2007. Presently across Milwaukee, approximately 2 out of every 3 one-year-olds and 1 out of every 3 two-year-olds are currently being tested for lead annually.

## Report Card *continued*

ing requirements are being followed consistently among children within their patient families.

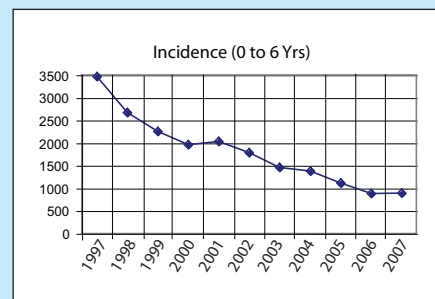
Though significant improvement in physician lead testing was recognized in 2007, some physicians did in fact regress, thus causing the overall positive trend to be somewhat lessened in comparison to what it could have been. The 13% increase in lead testing is welcomed news and represents a good start to a favorable trend that we must all work together to continue to grow and sustain.

Though the actual number of children tested still represents only approximately 1/3 of the total number of city of Milwaukee children eligible for lead testing in the less than 6 age group, this statistic is welcome news. A total of 23,716 children under the age of 6 received a blood-lead test in 2007.

In reviewing the 2007 report card, the City of Milwaukee Health Department's (MHD) Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and key community stakeholder groups can take pride in its current grades but must continue to work together diligently to continue to improve these scores. Reductions achieved once again in the prevalence and testing penetration rates for childhood lead poisoning within our city are clear indicators that effective progress is being made. We must continue however to educate both the public and professionals alike concerning the seriousness of lead poisoning and the paramount need to assure that current "3 Before 3" and Medicaid lead testing recommendations are being followed. 2010 is looming quickly. The goal of successfully eliminating childhood lead poisoning within the specified time frame requires an even greater sense of urgency and increased political will throughout the Milwaukee community. Continued emphasis by medical providers and a keener understanding of the challenges faced by families and neighborhoods where lead poisoning is concentrated further represent important keys to success. The MHD will continue to provide leadership to assure that lead safety remains a public health priority within the reach of every Milwaukee family.

## 2007 Childhood Lead Poisoning Incidence, Prevalence, and Testing Penetration Data City of Milwaukee Children Only

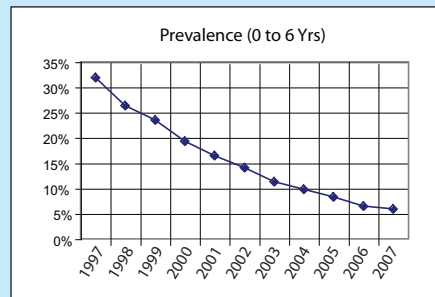
Fig. 1



Incidence (<6 years)	
Year	>=10µg/dL
1997	3,464
1998	2,670
1999	2,255
2000	1,961
2001	2,036
2002	1,787
2003	1,462
2004	1,380
2005	1,117
2006	884
2007	897

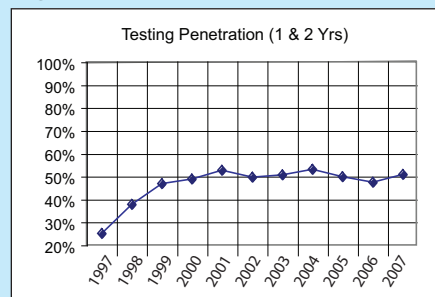
Prevalence (<6 years)	
Year	>=10µg/dL
1997	31.9%
1998	26.4%
1999	23.5%
2000	19.3%
2001	16.5%
2002	14.1%
2003	11.3%
2004	9.8%
2005	8.3%
2006	6.5%
2007	5.9%

Fig. 2



Testing Penetration (1&2 yrs only)	
Year	Testing Penetration
1997	25.0%
1998	37.7%
1999	46.9%
2000	48.8%
2001	52.6%
2002	49.7%
2003	50.6%
2004	53.0%
2005	49.9%
2006	47.5%
2007	50.9%

Fig. 3



## HOME ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

- City of Milwaukee Health Department** ..... [www.milwaukee.gov/health](http://www.milwaukee.gov/health)  
*General Information: Lead Poisoning Prevention Hotline* (414) 225-LEAD [225-5323]
- Fight Asthma Milwaukee Allies** ..... [www.famallies.org](http://www.famallies.org)  
*Community-based coalition of agencies fighting asthma* (414) 765-9355
- State Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS)** ..... [www.dhfs.wi.gov/lead](http://www.dhfs.wi.gov/lead)  
*Adult Lead Exposure and Reporting* (608) 266-0197
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** ..... [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)  
*National Lead Information Center Hotline* 1-800-424-5323
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** ..... [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
*Standards for Health Risk, Screening Recommendations, Asthma,  
 Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and Injury Information* (414) 639-3311
- National Center for Healthy Housing** ..... (410) 992-0712
- Environmental Health Watch** ..... [www.ehw.org](http://www.ehw.org)

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